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S H O R T V I E W
O F T H E
T E N E T S
O F

Tritheists, Sabellians, Trinitarians,
Arians, and Socinians ;

Intended to assist plain Christians in forming a general Idea of the principal Opinions held on the Trinity, and of the Difficulties attending them, and to promote Candour and Charity among those who differ in their Apprehensions on that Subject.

Who art thou that judgest another Man's Servant, ? To his own Master he standeth or falleth.

With all Lowliness and Meekness, with long Suffering, forbearing one another in Love ; endeavouring to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace.

PAUL.

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SHORT VIEW

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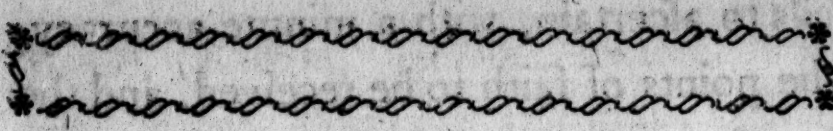
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SHORT VIEW, &c.

IT is well known, that the doctrine of the Trinity, from the fourth century to the present time, has been the occasion of much debate and enmity among christians. As the truth can be but one, and all besides is error, it were to be wished that, in the present instance, all could be brought to unite in the just discernment and acknowledgment of it. But, however it may be accounted for, all attempts to that purpose have hitherto proved ineffectual. The ancients convened coun-

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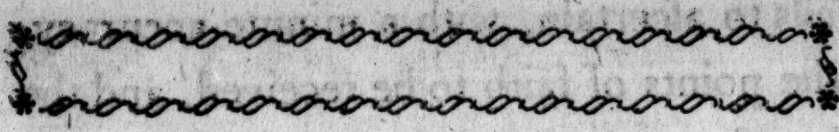
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cils to ascertain, with a minute accuracy, the points of faith to be received, and the heresies and errors to be avoided on this subject; they composed Creeds, backed with denunciations of everlasting vengeance on those who departed from them, and engaged the civil powers to enforce their decisions by penal laws, and the infliction of *wholesome severities* (such as fines, confiscations, imprisonment, exile and death) on those who rejected them. But, plausible as these expedients might appear in theory, they had a contrary effect when reduced to practice. They produced discord, confusion, hatred, and every evil work. In the revolution of human affairs there appeared councils against councils, creeds against creeds, fathers against fathers, and civil powers against civil powers. Nor have the moderns been more successful. In the present century, Clarke and Waterland, Emlyn and Boyse,

Boyle, Knight, Jackson, Peirce, Gafrell, Watts, Tomkins, and many others, have searched the scriptures, examined antiquity, and exerted all the powers of reason to fix the proper ideas we are to form of the sacred three, into whose names christians are baptized ; how they are distinct ; and how united, as one God ; but their researches and reasonings led them to very *different* conclusions. Within these five or six years past, Ben Mordecai, Elliot, Lindsey, Burgh, Jebb, Randolph, Bingham, Robinson, Horne, and many more have engaged in the same intricate disquisitions, but the result, as might have been foreseen, has not been *Unity*. Christians are not yet agreed whether the one God ~~whom~~ whom they worship be one person, or three persons, or neither, but one essence ; whether Jesus Christ be a mere man, or Almighty God and Man united in one person ; or neither, but a super-angelic spirit made flesh ; whether the Holy Ghost

be a distinct spirit from the Father and the Son, or a mere attribute and energy of the Father.

Perhaps the divine being has permitted these differences as a part of men's trial; that the lazy and implicit believer might be discriminated from the serious and diligent enquirer, and that christians might have an opportunity of exercising the virtues of meekness, candour, toleration and benevolence, towards each other. To promote the exercise of these amiable virtues is the design of the present tract; that by a view of the tenets of Tritheists, Sabellians, Trinitarians, Arians, and Socinians, and of the difficulties attending them, plain christians may have a better understanding of each others opinions, and thereby be induced to contend for the truth without anger, and to differ without scorn and enmity.

The truth of God needs not passionate invectives and malignant reproaches for its support and defence. *The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. The end of the commandment is Charity.* Every man is to examine and judge in the best manner he can for himself, as every man is *to stand or fall to his own master.* "The lowest understanding," (to use the words of Dr. Doddridge) "the meanest education, the most contemptible abilities, may suffice to give hard names, and to pronounce severe censures; a harsh anathema may be learnt by heart, and furiously repeated by one that could scarce read it, and, as was in truth the case in some ancient councils, may be signed by those that cannot write their names^a." In prosecuting the design above mentioned, of giving a short view of the tenets of Tritheists, Sabellians, &c. &c. we begin with those of Tritheists.

^a Sermon on Christian Candour and Unanimity.

I. Tritheists believe "that there is in the deity, three natures or substances absolutely equal in all respects, and joined together by no common essence^b."

The Tritheists, correspondent to their name, appear from this account to hold three equal Gods.

II. We are in the next place to give an account of the Sabellian Tenets. Sabellius lived in the third century. Of his heresy there are different accounts. Dr. Cudworth saith, that his doctrine was no other than this; "that there is but one hypostasis or *single individual essence* of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and consequently, that they are indeed but *three names, or notions, or modes*, of one and the selfsame thing^c." Epiphanius saith; in the

^b Mosheim's Eccl. Hist. vol. i. p. 473.

^c Intellectual System. chap. 4. p. 605.

one substance of the deity Sabellius put three names; as in man are reckoned body, soul, and spirit^d. Paul of Samosata, bishop of Antioch, was contemporary with Sabellius, and is considered as holding the same opinion with him. His doctrine, according to Mosheim, was, "that the Son and the Holy Ghost exist in God in the same manner as the faculties of *reason* and *activity* do in man: that Christ was born a mere man; but that the *reason* or *wisdom* of the father descended into him, and by him wrought miracles upon earth, and instructed the nations: and, finally, that, on account of this union of the *divine word* with the *man* Jesus, Christ might, though improperly, be called *God*." Two councils were called to examine the opinions of this bishop, the last of which was assembled in the year 269, and degraded him from the episcopal order.

^d Ben Mordecai, lett. 1. p. 15. See Cave's Hist. litt. p. 83.

^e Eccl. Hist. vol. 1. p. 248.

III. The true faith of the trinity is supposed to lie between Tritheism and Sabellianism, or to consist partly of the one and partly of the other; for Trinitarians acknowledge with Tritheists, that the three persons are *each God*, and with the Sabellians, that they have one *individual essence*. To keep clear of these two extremes (the Scylla and Charybdis in theology) is a difficulty. Dr. Sherlock, by maintaining with too much strictness the distinct personality of father, son, and spirit, verged into Tritheism; while Dr. South, by too rigorously asserting the unity, verged into Sabellianism. To prevent confusion and error on a point of so much consequence, it has been asked, whether the Trinity is to be considered as one infinite spirit, having three distinctions called persons; or three infinite spirits inseparably united. Here Trinitarians are divided; some maintaining the former opinion, and others the latter. Those who hold the trinity to be one infinite spirit

spirit are called *nominal* or *modal* Trinitarians, because they are supposed to hold only a trinity of *names*, or *modes*, of one spirit: and those who hold the trinity to be three spirits, or substances, mysteriously joined, are called *Realists*; as they really maintain three persons in the obvious acceptation of the word person. Dr. South, Dr. Wallis, Mr. Hooker, Mr. Baxter, Bishop Burnet, Dr. Watts, and most of the schoolmen were *Nominals*. Bishop Bull, Bishop Fowler, Dr. Cudworth, Episcopius, Dr. Sherlock, Mr. How, Dr. Waterland, were *Realists*^f. These two sorts of Trinitarians are generally esteemed orthodox, though their ideas of the one true God be as different as one spirit, and the union of three spirits. In the last age they had warm contentions. The Realists bore hard on the Nominals as to the idea they affixed to the word *person*; and they seldom at-

^f Ben Mordecai, Lett. i. p. 36. 37. Dr. Watts's Important Questions, p. 174, 8vo.

tempt a definition of it, as they use it in a sense different from what it means when applied to men. Dr. Wallis said, the three persons were three *somewhats*. Their contentions ran so high, that in the year 1695, the Vice Chancellor of Oxford, with the heads of Colleges and Halls, at a general meeting at Oxford, decreed the principles of the Realists *heretical*, and contrary to the doctrine of the Church of England. The Realists on the other hand asserted, that what the Oxford heads had condemned, as heretical, was the Nicene faith, and that of the Church of England: and Dr. Sherlock said, he would, any day in the year, procure a meeting, of twice as many as wise and learned men, to censure their decrees. Thus it remains undecided, whether the *Realists* or the *Nominals* are orthodox. The former seem inclining towards Tritheism, and the latter

g Ben Mordecai, Lett. 1. p. 37, 38.

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towards Sabellianism. To decide between them, these two questions obviously occur. Doth the scripture *explicitly* affirm that the one true God is three infinite spirits, or minds, or substances, united? or one infinite spirit, in which are three persons, father, son, and holy ghost? The true answer is, the scripture *explicitly* affirms *neither*. Both parties build their opinions on *reasonings* and deductions from scripture.

Dr. Watts observes, " that so far as our ideas of arithmetic and reason can reach, this seems to be a plain truth; *if one infinite spirit be one God, two or three infinite spirits must be two or three Gods*. And though the patrons of this opinion suppose these three spirits to be so nearly united as to be called one God, merely to avoid the charge of Polytheism, yet it must be granted that this *one God* must be one *complex, infinite being, or spirit*, made up

of three single, infinite beings, or spirits; which is such a notion of the one true God, as I think neither reason nor revelation will admit; and yet, if it were the true notion of the one God, it is very strange that scripture should not clearly and expressly reveal it^b." How easily might a realist have retorted on the good doctor:

The scripture speaks of father, son, and spirit, in such terms as, according to the plain and obvious meaning of words, suit only three distinct persons, or minds having distinct consciousness, thought, and will; and yet if it were the true notion of the one God, that these three have only one numerical consciousness, thought, and will, and subsist in one infinite mind, or spirit, *it is very strange that scripture should not clearly and expressly reveal it.* But let us attend to the Realist himself. "To say there are three divine persons,

^b Watts's Important Questions.

and not three distinct infinite minds, is both heresy and nonsense." "It is *Sabellian jargonry*," says another. This charge of heresy, nonsense, and Sabellian jargonry, by the *Realists*, against the *Nominals*, should not be admitted without sufficient evidence. Let the tenets of the *Nominals* be therefore recited.—Dr. Watts saith, "there are several considerations which lead me to agree with this general opinion of *almost* all our divines, in the two last centuries, (*viz.*) that *the godhead of Christ is the same individual godhead with that of the father*; and that his divine nature is not *another* infinite spirit distinct from the father, whatever sublime distinctions there may be in that one infinite spirit; one of which (*viz.*) the *word* or *wisdom*, may perhaps have a more peculiar respect to the second person in the

i Dr. Sherlock and Dr. Cudworth, as quoted by Ben Mordecai, Lett. 1. p. 37.

trinity

trinity (viz.) the son ; and the other (viz.) the *power of God*, to the holy Ghost^k.” —St. Austin explains the trinity by *mind*, *wisdom*, and *love*^l. —Calvin saith, “ that every mans mind inclines to this ; first to consider *God*, then the *wisdom* rising out of him, and last of all, the *power* by which he executes his decrees^m.” —Mr. Nye saith, “ the first person of the trinity is unbegotten mind ; or original wisdom, called the father : next is the *logos*, reflex or *begotten wisdom*, generated by God’s contemplating and knowing his own perfections, which is named the *son* : lastly, the divine *volition*, or *love*, God’s eternal spiration of love towards himself, on that account fitly called spirit. —The three persons differ as a mind and its actsⁿ.” —

^k Important Questions, p. 130.

^l Ben Mordecai, lett. 1, p. 121.

^m Institutes. b. 1. c. 13. § 18.

ⁿ S. Nye on the trinity, p. 19. 22.

“ Three persons, the father, son, and holy spirit ; the father, the *cause* of all things ; the son his *wisdom* and *word* ; the holy spirit his *virtue* and *power*. ” —

By comparing these extracts from the writings of nominal Trinitarians, and with the preceding account of the doctrine of Sabellius, and of bishop Paul of Samosata, the reader may judge for himself of the ground of the charges brought by the Realists.—Dr. Sherlock brings another charge, and saith, “ though the *Nominals* and *Socinians* differ in some terms of speech, yet the Socinians say, and I think *very truly*, that there is no considerable difference in their faith, as they state it^p. ” As it is hardly prudent to trust to the re-

^o The French Confession, p. 70. and the Belgil Confession, p. 89. as cited by Mr. Emlyn.

^p Dr. Sherlock's distinction between real and nominal Trinitarians compared, p. 12. as cited in a pamphlet entitled, Reflections on Mr. Peirce's Answer to Mr. Enty.

presentation of an adversary, in a matter of so much consequence, I shall immediately lay before the reader the tenets of the Socinians, that he may judge for himself of this charge also.

IV. The Socinians conceive the deity to be one, as to person and essence^q, or one infinite spirit, called in scripture, one God the father; Christ is a mere man like other men, having received his birth in a miraculous manner, of the virgin Mary^r. The wisdom of the father was manifested in him, by the doctrines he taught, and the power of the father, by the miraculous works he performed^s. The holy spirit is an attribute of the father, or the father himself^t.

^q Toulmin's Life of Socinus, p. 211.

^r Ibid. p. 178.

^s Lindsey's Sequel, chap. 4.

^t Ibid. p. 175.

Having now the principles of the Sabellians, nominal Trinitarians, and Socinians before us, let us consider whether they nearly agree, as has been suggested by the Realists.

The Sabellian, and nominal Trinitarian worship God as a trinity; but this trinity is one infinite mind, or spirit, in which *wisdom, love, or power* dwell. The Socinian doth not worship God as a trinity, but as one infinite mind or spirit; and that spirit possesses eternal wisdom, love, or power. Here the object of worship is *precisely* the same, only that object is described by different words.—Paul of Samosata, the Sabellian, saith, that the reason or wisdom of the father, descended on the man Jesus, and by him worked miracles, &c.

The nominal Trinitarian saith, that *wisdom*, the second person in the trinity,

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was united with the man Jesus, so that he was God and Man in one Person.—The Socinian faith, that Jesus was a mere man, but the *logos*, or wisdom of God, was manifested in him. Hence he was Emmanuel, or God with us. “God,” saith Mr. Lindsey, “was with us in Christ, by his wisdom and power communicated to him for the instruction and benefit of mankind.” Here also the difference consists, principally, about calling the *logos*, or *wisdom* of God, a divine person.

The scriptures speak of the sufferings and death of the son of God as a ransom for sin; and Trinitarians apprehend a peculiar advantage attending their scheme in this view, as none but an infinite God, say they, could make satisfaction for sin, which being committed against God, deserves infinite punishment. Even here, perhaps the difference between the nominal Trinitarian and Socinian, may not be
so

so great as at first imagined. The Socinian asks how this infinite satisfaction was made? Was it not by the death of Christ, as the apostle saith we are reconciled to God by the death of his son? Rom. v. 10.—The Nominal cannot deny it.—Well then, replies the Socinian, did the *immortal* God die? Was eternal *wisdom*, whom you improperly call the second person in the trinity, *crucified* and *slain*?—What can the Nominal answer? If he answer in the affirmative, it is a most horrid declaration. He will evade a plain answer if he can, and say the *God-man* suffered and died; or, it is a mystery. But the Socinian will not let it so pass. Tell me ingenuously, he will say, do you mean that the *divine nature* of Christ, according to your notion, suffered and died?—The truth will come out at last.—“No; perfect deity is *impassible* and *immortal*.”—I understand you, rejoins the Socinian, a mere man, according to your scheme,

made infinite satisfaction; as a mere man suffered and died; and you mean no more when you assert that the *God-man*, suffered and died; attributing to the whole person, according to your notion, what in strictness of speech is applicable to him as man only; and with equal propriety you might have said, that the most high God was a babe; slept; was hungry; fatigued; and thirsty; as all this might with truth be predicated of the *man* Jesus.

—Where doth the scripture assert that God could not forgive sin without infinite satisfaction? or that Christ paid such a satisfaction?—But I will press the matter no further. The difference between us consists principally in this; you and the Sabellian use orthodox terms, and I do not: you express yourselves by what appears to me, improper terms; since in the sense you affirm God to be three persons, in one spiritual substance, every
good

good man may be said to be *three persons*; as every good man has a *mind* endowed with *wisdom*, and *love* or *power*. Upon the whole we nearly agree. You say the man Jesus bore the sufferings and death of the cross to make infinite satisfaction for the sins of mankind; and I say he suffered and died to save them."

Whatever the reader may think of this short dialogue, it is the opinion of the author, that if the nominal Trinitarian, and Socinian, had been cotemporaries with Paul of Samosata, and avowed their sentiments before the council, which deposed him, they would have been excommunicated as *heretics*. This, however, may be justly urged in their favour, that they clearly maintain that fundamental principle of all true religion, the *unity* of God, whatever they may do with respect to the real personality of the son
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(excepting as mere man) and of the holy spirit. On the contrary, the Realists as clearly maintain the distinct personality of the *sacred three*; but whether they hold the *unity* has been questioned. As the observations of the Realists, on the system of the Nominals, have been recited, it is but equity to recite, in return, the observations of the Nominals on that of the Realists. The reflections of Dr. Watts have been already quoted, *that if one infinite spirit be one God, two or three infinite spirits must be two or three Gods, &c.* Bishop Burnet, on the articles, speaking of the opinion of the Realists, saith, "it is in a good degree intelligible;" but adds, "it seems hard to reconcile it with the idea of unity, which seems to belong to a being of infinite perfection, and with the many express declarations that are made in the scriptures, concerning the unity of God^u." Perhaps the Bishop had in his thoughts

that declaration of our Saviour, *God is a spirit*, not three spirits. However this might be, here is a sad dilemma. If we embrace the notion of the Nominals, in regard to the trinity, we are *Sabellians*, according to the Realists. If, on the other hand, we embrace the notion of the Realists, we give up, according to the Nominals, the scriptural unity of God, and hold three Gods. This last imputation seems just: for if we say, that the three persons are coequal, according to the system of the Realists, and each God, it is plain they are three equal Gods; but the Realists say, to preserve the unity, that the three are inseparably joined in one substance. Be it so; all that this addition amounts to, according to the common principles of reason is, they are *three equal Gods united in one substance*.

It should seem from hence, that the phrase, the *only true God*, or the *one God*, doth

doth not denote one of the three persons, nor the three together, but the one *individual essence* of the three; which idea of unity, appears hard to be reconciled with many passages of scripture, such as, *To us there is but one God the father; this is life eternal to know thee* (the Father) *to be the only true God; and besides me there is no God^v*; that is, according to the last of these passages, besides *me*, the *undivided essence* of father, son, and spirit, there is no God. But the pronoun *me*, according to the obvious meaning of the word, is characteristic of person, not of essence; and then the passage must run, besides *me*, the *three* divine persons, there is no God. These are mentioned as difficulties, of which the reader may judge as he pleases. The manner in which the Realists endeavour to obviate the objection of the Nominals, in regard to

^v 1 Cor. viii. 6. John xvii. 1. 3. Isa. xlv. 6.

their holding more Gods than one, is this; they say, the Father is the *only self-existent* God, but that the son is God of, or from God, and that the holy spirit is God from the Father and the Son; and thus by allowing a *subordination* of the Son and Spirit, to the Father, (at the same time they have one generical nature) they apprehend, they maintain the divine unity, consistently with the distinct personality of the sacred three. They allow, that if they held the three persons to be equally *underived* and *selfexistent*, the charge of the Nominals, Socinians, and Arians, in relation to their holding three co-ordinate and supreme Gods, would be just. Dr. Waterland, the learned and able opposer of Dr. Clarke, saith, “ the common answer to the charge of Tritheism, or Ditheism (two Gods) as well of the postnicene, as antinocene fathers, was,—that there is but *one head, root, fountain, father* of all, not in respect of *authority*, but of *substance*, also.—This was the

concurrent sense of all in general, and to this they chiefly resolved the *unity* of the Godhead. Two *unoriginate* divine persons, however otherwise inseparable, would be two Gods according to the ancients^w.—Bishop Pearson, on the creed, saith, “that if there were more than one” (of the three persons) “which were from *none*, it could not be denied but there were *more Gods than one*”^x.—There can be but one person, originally, of himself, subsisting in that infinite being; because a *plurality of persons, so subsisting, would necessarily imply a multiplicity of Gods*.—This priority” (of the first person in the trinity) “doth properly, and naturally result from the divine paternity, so that the Son must necessarily be second to the Father, from whom he receiveth his origination, and the Holy Ghost to

^w Dr. Waterland's Defence of his Queries, p. 84. Second Vindication, p. 207.

^x p. 40.

^y *ibid.* p. 134.

the Son. Neither can we be thought to want a sufficient foundation for the priority of the first person in the trinity, if we look upon the numerous testimonies of the ancient Doctors, who have not stuck to call the *Father* the *origin*, the *cause*, the *author*, the *root*, the *fountain*, and the *head* of the *Son*, or the *whole divinity*. — This *origination*, in the *divine paternity*, hath been anciently looked upon as the *assertion of the unity*.* — Bishop Beveridge saith, “the Father is placed first, and really is the first person, not as if he was before the other two, for they are all co-eternal; but because the other two (the Son and Spirit) received their essence from him; for the Son was begotten of the Father; and the Holy Ghost proceeded both from the Father and the Son; and therefore the Father is termed by the primitive Christians, the *root and the fountain* of deity.”

* Dr. Waterland's Defence of his Queries, p. 37, 40.

α Private Thoughts, pt. 2, p. 44.

—Lord Chancellor King, who is generally thought to be the author of the *Critical History of the Apostles Creed*, asserts, “ It is the observation of Ruffinus, that in all the eastern creeds, it is, *I believe in one God the Father* ; where, if by the eastern, he means the Nicene, or Constantinopolitan, it is certainly true ; or if he means the ancient creeds, used before either of those, it is true, not only of the eastern, but of the western also.”—Archbishop Wake, in his catechism, asks this question ;—“ How does it appear that Christ received his divine nature from the Father ?—A. It can only be known by that revelation which God has made of it in the holy scriptures : where he is, for this reason, said to be *the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person : the image of the invisible God—to be from God—to have life from the Father, and the like. And upon this account it is, that our Saviour himself says, that the*

Father is greater than he."—Dr. Owen, on Heb. i. 8, 9. makes this observation: "God is said to be the *God* of the Son, in respect of his *divine nature*, as he is his Father, so *his God*; whence he is said to be *God of God*, as having his nature communicated unto him by virtue of his eternal generation."—Mr. Burkit, on John xiv. 28, remarks, "the Father may be said to be *greater* than Christ in regard to his paternity, as being the fountain of the Deity. The Father is of himself, but the Son is begotten of the Father."—Bishop Bull, also, observes in his defence of the Nicene Faith: "According to the opinion of the ancients, to which also common sense agreeth; if there were in the divinity, two *unbegotten*, or two *independent* principles, it would follow, not only that the Father would be deprived of that *pre-eminence*, by which he has his divinity of himself, that is, from no

c Dr. Tucker's brief and dispassionate View, p. 17.

d P. 109.

other;

other; but also, that we must make *two Gods*. But now, on the contrary, if we allow the *subordination*, by which the Father alone is God of himself, and the Son is God from God the Father; then those ancient writers thought both the *pre-eminence* of the Father, and the *monarchy* of the universe, would be preserved entire."

From these quotations (to which many more might be added) it appears, that the Realists endeavour to obviate the charge of Tritheism, brought against them by the Nominals, by asserting the *Father alone* to be God of himself, *underived, unoriginate*; but that the Son and Spirit are neither, as they receive their divinity wholly from the Father, and consequently, are *inferior* to him. God the Father is the God of the Son, even (as Dr. Owen observed) with *respect to his divine nature*. And thus by maintaining the *subordina-*

^e Sect. 4. cap. 4. § 2. Dr. Clarke's Scr. Doct. § 39.

tion of the Son and Spirit to the Father, the *monarchy* of the universe is, as Bishop Bull asserts, preserved entire. Whereas, if they held the three to be equally *self-existent*, and *unoriginate*, they allow the charge of the Nominals would be just.

The moderation of the Realists and Nominals, towards each other, in our days, deserves much commendation. They do not minutely enquire into each other's ideas of the Trinity, but agree in the use of the same orthodox terms; though the ideas they affix to those terms, be as different, as one infinite spirit, in which are three distinctions improperly called persons; and three infinite spirits, the first of which is self-existent, the second begotten, and the third proceeding from the two first, and all united in some mysterious manner.

V. The Arians join with the nominal Trinitarians, Sabellians, and Socinians,

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in believing the one true God to be one infinite mind, or spirit, and whom the scriptures call the Father. They join with the Realists in holding the Son, and Holy Ghost, to be spirits distinct from the Father, and subordinate and inferior to him. They differ from the Socinians, in believing the *word* to have been in the beginning, that is, before all ages, with the self-existent God; but not the self-existent God himself, with whom he was, according to the notion of Sabellius. The Son is, according to them, called God, not because of his metaphysical substance, but of his relative attributes, and the divine power and dominion communicated to him from the Father. They assert that the holy spirit, in scripture, is no where *expressly* stiled God, or Lord; or represented as sitting on a throne, or judging the world: that christians are never called in scripture *his* servants, or commanded to pray to him or praise him, or to ascribe glory and dominion to him; and
that

that there is no scriptural example of either.

Many of these positions are disputed. It is said that the holy spirit is plainly styled God. Acts v. 3, 4—*to lie to the Holy Ghost—thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.* They answer: Ananias by lying to the Apostles, did, in effect, lie to the holy spirit, who dwelt in them; and by lying to the holy spirit, he, in effect, lied to God himself, who dwelt in them by his spirit: and they refer to Luke x. 16. 1 Thess. iv. 8. 1 Cor. iii. 16. Eph. ii. 21, 22. in support of their interpretation.

It is further objected to them, that they hold two Gods; God the Father, and God the Son. They give much the same answer as the Realists do to the like charge. See the foregoing quotation

f Dr. Clarke's Scr. Doc. pt. 2, § 25. Emlyn's Remarks on the four London Ministers, chap. 1.

from Bishop Bull. There is in the “ monarchy of the universe, but *one authority*, original in the *Father*, derivative in the *Son*; therefore the *one God* (absolutely speaking) always signifies *him* in whom the power or authority is *original* and *undervived*.” Whether this explanation of the divine unity be admitted, or not; in this respect there was no difference between Arius and the Nicene Fathers; for the *one God* with both, as appears from their creeds, was the *Father Almighty*. The ancients placed the divine unity in acknowledging the Father, alone, the fountain of deity; and his being solely *unoriginate, self-existent, and independent*; as Bishop Pearson, Bishop Bull, and Doctor Waterland, observed, in the foregoing quotations. It is certain the scripture never *expressly* asserts, that the *Father, Son, and Spirit, are the one God; or one in essence; or one in consent and*

*power**. These are the different explanations adopted by learned men, to solve the difficulty, that there should be but one God; and yet the Father should, in scripture, be stiled God, the Son God, (which is denied by Mr. Lindsey. Sequel p. 199) and the Holy Ghost God, (denied also by the Arians.) All that the scripture *expressly* asserts, is, that *to us there is but one God, the Father*; that Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of the Father; is stiled God, and one (*ev* one thing) with the Father, John xvii. 22: and the holy spirit, the spirit of God, and of Christ; but is never said, in the New Testament, to be one with the Father and the Son,

* It is said John x. 30. *I and my Father are one*. One what? *one God*, say some, *one Essence*, say others; but the text says neither. The Greek is, *ev one thing*. He that planteth and he that watereth are one, *ev*, one *thing*. 1. Cor. iii. 6. 8. Paul and Apollos were not one man, or one in undivided essence. Query, whether Christ and the Father were one, as Paul and Apollos were one; one in consent and will, agreeably to the words of our Saviour, *that they may be one even as we are one*? John xvii. 21. 22.

except in 1 John v. 7, which Sir Isaac Newton has proved, as many learned men think, not to be genuine; but to have crept from the margin into the text*.

The origin of the Arian controversy was this. Alexander, bishop of Alexan-

* The common argument for the divine unity is this. The Father according to scripture is stiled God; the Son God; and the Holy Ghost God. But, the same scripture saith, there is but one God. It follows, that Father, Son, and Spirit, are one God. Some have stated the same argument thus. The Father according to scripture is stiled God; the Son God; the Holy Ghost is never expressly so stiled: Moses is called God, Exod. vii. 1. Angels and Magistrates are called Gods, Exod. xxii. 28. Psal. lxxxii. 1. 6. John x. 34. 35. But the same scripture asserts, there is but one God. It follows, that Father, Son, Moses, Angels, and Magistrates are one—Perhaps, Matt. xxiii, 9. 10. may throw some light in reconciling the scripture to itself in saying, there is but one God the Father, 1 Cor. viii. 6; and yet calling other beings Gods. *Call no man your father upon the earth, for one is your Father, &c.* and yet christians call men their *natural* and *spiritual* Fathers.—*One is your Master even Christ,* and yet men have masters besides him. Query then, whether *one* father, and *one* master, do not signify one supreme father and master? So the one God signifies him, who by way of eminence is supreme.

dria,

dria, maintained, in an assembly of the Presbyters, of that city, that the Son was of the same dignity and essence with the Father. Whether Arius apprehended that this notion implied a division of the divine essence or substance, or introduced the Sabellian heresy, so it was, he opposed his Bishop, and asserted *there was a time when the Son was not; and that he was created out of nothing*. Alexander being disturbed by these positions of his Presbyter, commanded him to renounce them, and contended, that the "Son is from eternity, *immutable*, like the Father; excepting that he is not *unbegotten* or *selfexisting*; that on this account, the Father is *greater* than the Son; and the Son is of a *middle nature* between the first cause of all things, and the creatures, which, from a state of non-existence, were called into being^b." The emperor Constantine condescended to mediate between these

^b Jortin's Rem. Eccl. Hist. vol. 3, p. 47.

two zealots; found fault with Alexander, and told him he required from his Presbyters a declaration of their sentiments concerning a silly, empty question:—and Arius, that he had imprudently uttered what he should not have even thought of; and that questions about such things, proceed from an idle itch of disputation, and were of so high a nature, as to be incomprehensible; and as they did not introduce any *new heresy, concerning the worship of God*, they should communicate with each other. This salutary advice was rejected, in consequence of which, the Nicene council was called in the year 325. This council decreed that the Son was *consubstantial* (that is, having the same kind of substance, as an earthly son, partakes of the same kind of nature with his father) with God the Father, in opposition to Arius, who held they were of *different* substance, and in opposition to Sabellius,

2 Chandler's Introduction to the Hist. of the Inquisition, p. 25.

whose

whose tenet was, that they were of one *individual substance*.—If these different notions of Arius, Alexander, and the Nicene Fathers, be tried by the sacred writings, it will be found, that there is nothing in those writings said expressly concerning them. It is said, indeed, that Jesus is the *Son* of God, and the *only begotten* of the Father, from which it has been inferred, that as every Son of Man partakes of the nature of *his* Father; so Jesus, being the Son of God, partakes of the nature of God. But if it be considered, that Adam, Angels, and sincere Christians, are said in scripture to be Sons of God, and the last mentioned, partakers of the divine nature (Luke iii. 38. Gen. vi. 4. Job xxxviii. 7. Rom. viii. 14. 2 Pet. i. 4) the argument perhaps will not bear to have much stress laid upon it.—That the Nicene Fathers should decree Jesus Christ to be consubstantial with his Father, is

k Ben Mordecai, let. 1. p. 90. Jortin's Rem. Ecclesiast. Hist. vol. 3. p. 96.

not strange; as it was believed in their days, that angels, and the souls of men, were generated from the divine substance. In this, as to human souls, they had the concurrence of the philosophers of Greece and Rome'.—Dr. Clarke asserts, that the scripture has no where at all declared what is the proper metaphysical *nature, essence, or substance*, of any of the three persons, but describes and distinguishes them always by their *personal characters, offices, powers, and attributes*; that the scripture never makes mention of any limitation of time, when the Son and Spirit derived their being from the Father; nor of the *particular metaphysical manner* of their derivation, but supposes them to have existed with the Father from the

1 Jackson's Reply. Pref. p. 6, and p. 5. 55. 286. 328. Gibbon on the Decline of the Roman Empire, p. 467. Cicero saith, *audiebam Pythagoram, Pythagoreosque, incolas pene nostros, qui essent Italici Philosophi quondam nominati, nunquam dubitasse, quin ex universa mente divina delibatos animos haberemus.*—Cato major.

begin-

beginning, and before all worlds". From hence it appears, by the way, that Dr. Clarke disavowed those peculiarities of Arius for which he was condemned, and therefore, was improperly denominated an Arian. If the above assertions of the Doctor, be allowed to be true; all those disputes which have been carried on concerning the *essence*, or *substance* of the three persons, and the precise manner in which the Son was begotten, and the Holy Spirit proceeded, have been about speculations of which men in the present imperfect state can arrive at no certainty. It is wrangling about what they have no idea of, and attempting *to be wise above what is written*. It is not the *essence* of God, simply considered, that is the object of our veneration, gratitude, praise, obedience, fear, hope, and trust; but his being our Father, Preserver, Benefactor, Sovereign, and Judge. Were it possible (with

reverence be it spoken) that these relations were annihilated, and he had no concern with us, and we had nothing to hope, or fear, from him, those duties of gratitude, praise, &c. would cease, notwithstanding his eternal essence. In like manner, whether the Son and Spirit be of the same essence with the Father, or not; the duties we owe them result from the character and offices they appear to sustain, according to scripture, in the important business of our salvation. The gospel was preached to the poor and unlearned; and therefore it cannot be thought that a wise, and a merciful being, would place their everlasting happiness on speculations concerning the *consubstantial generation* of the Son, and the *procession* of the Holy Ghost, in one numerical essence with the Father, unless he had *clearly* and *expressly* revealed them. On the contrary, in reading the New Testament, we find, as Dr. Watts justly observes, “ that the stress of our salvation is laid upon our humble sense of
our

our sins, our return to God the Father, by sincere *repentance*, and change of heart and life, and our unfeigned *faith* in the Lord Jesus;" that is, as the Son of God, the Messiah, the sent of God, acting in his name, and by his authority, and constituted by him an allsufficient Saviour and Lord. If the reader wishes to examine the ground of these assertions, he may consult the following texts: Acts xx. 21. Acts xvi. 31. Rom. x. 9. John xx. 31. Mark i. 15. John x. 25. John v. 30, 36, 37, 43. Matt. x. 40. Mark ix. 37. John vii. 16. John viii. 26, 28, 42. John xii. 44, 49, 50. John xiii. 20. John xvii. 21, 23. 1 Cor. i. 30. Heb. vii. 25. Acts ii. 36. Phil. ii. 9, 10, 11. 1 Pet. i. 21. Eph. i. 22.

From the passages here referred to, it would seem, that our faith in Christ respects him as the person appointed and sent of God, to be the Saviour of the world, and that our dependence, and trust

in his declarations, and promises, ultimately terminate in the Father, in whose name he appeared, whose will he revealed, and by whom he was raised from the dead, and made head over all things to the church; and therefore the belief of his *co-equality*, and *consubstantiality*, with the Father, is not essential to the comfort, and hope of christians, or their salvation.

The short account of the tenets of Trinitheists, Sabellians, Trinitarians, Socinians, and Arians, intended in this tract, is now before the reader. Some difficulties attend each of these tenets, but which has the greatest difficulty, or comes nearest to scripture, is left to the inquisitive and unprejudiced to determine. The subject itself is of a mysterious nature, and men can know no more of it than God hath thought proper to reveal. When they have attempted to explain, what was not revealed of it, for the most part, they involved themselves in great perplexities, and

and their explications terminated in some absurdity or contradiction. It has been an unhappy case, when such explications have been obtruded as divine truths, and maintained with a zeal which consumed the benign spirit of charity. The humble, inquisitive, and serious christian, who wishes to model his faith of the trinity, not by custom, interest, or human creeds, but by the clear declarations of holy writ, should therefore, be careful to distinguish between the reasonings and speculations of men, and the express assertions of divine inspiration, and never to admit the former but as far as they are consistent with the latter. He should look into his Bible with the disposition of a learner, to receive what is there revealed, and not to seek for arguments to support a pre-conceived hypothesis; and in the course of his enquiries should not forget addressing God for his guidance. It may not be improper, also, to add, that it is an important part of wisdom to stop on this subject, where

where revelation is silent, and not multiply conjectures, where reason hath no sufficient data to decide. The propriety of these reflections will appear evident, after the perusal of the subsequent remarks on the preceding systems relating to the trinity.

In order to decide on any scripture doctrine, the most obvious question is, whether it be *expressly*, or in so many words, affirmed in scripture? As Tritheists, Sabellians, and Trinitarians, *real* and *nominal*, express their opinions in the same phraseology, let us ask, doth the scripture *expressly* affirm that God Almighty is Father, Son, and Spirit, three persons, each God, and yet one God in essence? It is certain, no such proposition formally occurs in the sacred writings. How then, it may be asked, came christians to adopt this idea of God, that he is three persons, or three in any sense? the answer is, from reasonings on the peculiar and distinguishing titles, characters, and offices ascribed to

to Father, Son, and Spirit, in scripture, compared with the declarations, that there is but one God. Archbishop Tillotson observes, that the three in whose name every christian is baptized, “are spoken of with as much distinction from one another, as we use to speak of three several persons. So that though the word trinity be not found in scripture, yet these three are there expressly and frequently mentioned; and a trinity is nothing but three of any thing.”—“Such different properties, actions, characters and circumstances are,” saith Dr. Watts, “ascribed to these three, as are usually ascribed to three dis-

n Sermon 48.—It cannot be proved that the word trinity, as applied to Father, Son, and Spirit, was used by any writer in the Christian Church before Theophilus Antiochenus, about A. D. 180. Dr. Scot's Essay on the Trinity, preface p. 9. See Ben Mor. let. 1. p. 106. The first creed that mentions any thing like an unity in trinity is that of Lucian the Martyr, about the end of the third century, and the words according to Athanasius were, “In substance they are three things, in agreement they are one.” Mr. Robertson's attempt to explain the word reason, &c. p. 61.

tinct persons among men^o." What is attributed to the Father, cannot be attributed to the Son; and what is attributed to the Father, and Son, cannot be attributed to the Holy Spirit. For instance; the Father is represented as having a Son, but this cannot be said of the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Father is said to send both the Son, and Spirit. John xii. 49, John xiv. 26. But it is never said that they send the Father. The Son hath a body prepared him, and was made flesh. Heb. x. 5, John i. 14, but neither the Father, nor the Spirit is said to be incarnate. Jesus Christ is spoken of as a mediator between God and Men, and, in one place, Rom. viii. 27, the Spirit is said to make intercession for the Saints according to the will of God; but God the Father is never affirmed to be a mediator, or intercessor, with the Son, or Spirit. The Son is said to live by the Father, and that

the Father gave him to have life in himself, John vi. 57, John v. 26, but the scripture will by no means support us in reversing these declarations. These considerations, along with many others which might be adduced, justify christians in denominating the Father, and Son, distinct persons ; meaning by person, a distinct, intelligent agent, according to the common acceptation of the word ; but many have doubted the distinct personality of the Holy Spirit. With submission, this seems to have been without just ground, as personal characters are ascribed to him. He is represented as sent, as coming, going, hearing, teaching, John xiv. 26, John xv. 26, 27, John xvi. 7, 13 ; as being resisted, and grieved, Acts vii. 51. Eph. iv. 30 ; as speaking, and commanding, Acts x. 19, Acts xiii. 2 ; and he is mentioned distinctly from the Father, and the Son, Matt. xxviii. 19, 2 Cor. xiii. 14, Eph. ii. 18, 1 Cor. vi. 11. In short, it is apprehended, that by the same kind of argu-

ments that one should prove from scripture, that Peter, John, and Paul, were three persons, the Father, Son, and Spirit may be proved to be such, that is, three spirits having distinct understanding and will. The Father, and Son, are represented as reciprocally knowing each other, and as having distinct wills, John x. 15, Heb. x. 7, John vi. 38; and the Holy Spirit receiveth that which is the Son's, and sheweth it to the apostles, and divideth to every man severally as he willeth, John xvi. 14, 1 Cor. xii. 11. Supposing it then proved, that the scripture will justify our calling the Father, Son, and Spirit, three persons, in the same sense that we should call three angels, or spirits, three persons, let us consider how the principles, before recited, of Tritheists, &c. will be affected.

We say then, that Father, Son, and Spirit, are each God, equal in power, dominion and glory. Then, there are three equal Gods. But we say, their essences
are

are inseparably united ; and thus, there is but one God. Let it be allowed ; one God, in that case, is a compound of three Spirits or Gods, equal in all perfection. The Realist seeth the consequence, and intends to avoid it.—The Father “ only hath it (his being) of himself, and is the original of all power and essence in the Son^p. ” — “ It is certain that the Son has his knowledge and every other perfection, from the Father, in the same sense as he hath also his nature or substance from the Father^q. ” — It is most reasonable to assert that there is but one person *who is from none* ; and the very generation of the Son and procession of the Holy Ghost undeniably prove that neither of these two can be that person. It followeth therefore, that this person is the *Father*, which name speaks nothing of *dependence*, nor supposeth any kind of priority in ano-

^p Bishop Pearson on the Creed, p. 34.

^q Dr. Waterland's Serm. vii. p. 267.

ther.” Admitting these principles of the Realists, let us consider the consequences which naturally flow from them. If then, we say that the Father alone is *from none*, unoriginate, or self-existent, and that the Son and Spirit derive their essence and perfections from him, we say in effect, that the Father is most high, and that the Son and Spirit are inferior to him; for, according to our Saviour’s maxim, *it is more blessed to give than to receive*. Acts xx. 35. and it seems agreeable to the principles of common sense to say, that he who alone is self-existent, and the fountain of deity, must be superior to those to whom these characters cannot be appropriated. Here then, the system of the Realist is embarrassed. If he asserts, that the three persons are equally self-existent, and independent; by his own confession he runs into Tritheism: if he asserts, that the Father alone is *from none*,

he makes the Son and Spirit to be *inferior* to him, notwithstanding a specifick sameness of essence; which is something like semi-arianism; and, according to him, one God is a compound of three Spirits, one underived, and two derived; one a self-existent God, and the other two deriving their deity from him. It is a natural question for a humble enquirer to put in this place, doth the scripture explicitly give us, any where, this idea of one God?

The *nominal* Trinitarian, Sabellian, Arian, and Socinian, apprehend that it doth not. The *Nominal* adopts a system which appears to him less perplexed and encumbered with difficulties.—As being next in order, let us consider his system. As he expresses his ideas in the very same terms with the Realist, it becomes necessary to have an explanation of those terms.—Pray, Sir, when you say, God is three persons, do you mean that he is three spirits, or one spirit?—One spirit.—Then how do you make it out, that he is *three persons*.

persons, or conscious agents, with distinct understanding and will?—That is not my idea of person.—No? Then, you depart from the idea of the scriptures, which speak of the *sacred three*, in the same terms, that men commonly speak of three persons properly so called. Sir, “the sacred writings were not addressed to the literati, to philosophers, and scholars, but to the common people, and consequently, they used words in their plain popular signification.” But you are, by your scheme, forced to use the word person in a sense contrary to its plain signification. The Father is a spirit according to the context, John iv. 23, 24. The Holy Spirit, by his very name, is a distinct Spirit from the Father; and the Son, as being begotten before all ages, and having a *body prepared him*, Heb. x. 5. and coming forth *from the Father into the world*, John xvi. 28. appears to have

Robinson's Plea.

been

been a distinct spirit from both*. But according to you, the Father, Son, and Spirit, each God, are but one Spirit, with one numerical consciousness and will, which seems irreconcilable according to the plain meaning of words with what we read in John xiv. 16, 17, 26. John xv. 16. Eph. ii. 18. Eph. iv. 4, 5, 6, &c. &c. Let us consider a particular instance. *The Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape, like a dove upon him (Christ) and a voice came from heaven, which said, thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased.* Luke iii. 22. According to the principles of the nominal Trinitarian, here is the one infinite Spirit descending on itself when united with man, and saying to itself in this state; thou art my beloved Son, in thee

* Divines frequently speak of a Covenant of Redemption, in which certain things were stipulated between the Father and the Son, prior to the incarnation.—Now, if the Father and the Son are only one Spirit, according to human ideas, there literally could be no Covenant, as only one mind, consciousness, and will, was concerned.

I am

I am well pleased : or perhaps, more accurately thus, one distinction in the infinite mind, descending upon another distinction in the same mind incarnate, when the mind itself not incarnate, saith to it, thou art my beloved Son, &c.—The Nominals have been, for the most part, embarrassed about giving a definition of the word person. If they use it in a sense denoting different *relations* or *characters*, as when one and the same man may be said to be three persons because he sustains the characters of Father, Son, and Brother ; or when George the third may be said to be king of England, king of Scotland, and king of Ireland ; when they apply it in that sense to the trinity, they are Sabellians, and, in effect, destroy the real personality of the Son (excepting as man) and of the Spirit. When Saint Au'stin was asked what the three persons were, he said, " human learning is scanty, and affords not terms to express it. It is therefore answered three persons, not as
if

if that was to the purpose, but somewhat must be said, and we must not be silent."

What end can it answer to use a word which is not to the purpose, or contrary to its plain and popular signification? Would it not be better entirely to discard it?

The observations now made shew, that the system of the Nominals is not without its great difficulties when compared with scripture, and though it certainly avoids Tritheism, yet it is not certain, that it keeps clear of Sabellianism. According to it, one and the same Spirit is begotten, and yet unbegotten, and yet neither, but proceeding; one and the same Spirit is the sender, and the sent; is incarnate, and yet not incarnate; comes down from heaven (the human nature of Christ did not come down from heaven) not to do his own will, but the will of himself, who sent himself: in short, one and

the same Spirit gives and receives satisfaction, and yet doth neither; and is at once a necessarily existent God, a begotten God, and a God by procession. If the scriptures had expressly given this idea of the supreme Being, christians would do right in implicitly receiving it as a sacred mystery, but as it is the result of human reasonings from revelation, they are justified in examining and rejecting it, if found not agreeable to that rule and standard of faith.

We are next in order, to consider the difficulties attending the *Sabellian* and *Socinian* schemes, but those difficulties are obvious to the attentive reader of the preceding remarks on *nominal* Trinitarianism respecting proper personality: for according to the former, the three persons are only three names of one being; and according to the latter, the Holy Spirit is but another name for the Father; and the Son is a mere man. We will therefore pass

pass on to consider the difficulties of what is commonly denominated *Arianism*. The Arians maintain the proper personality of the *sacred three* in the same sense as the *Realists*; but they deny, that those three are ever expressly said in scripture to be *the one God*, or of one *generic* or *individual* essence, this being wholly the result of reasoning. On the contrary, the word *God*, according to them, when used *absolutely*, in scripture, never denotes three persons, but the person of the Father only. He is stiled the *one God*, in contradistinction to the Son and Spirit^u; *the true God*^v; *the only true God*^w; *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*^x.—The most sound Trinitarians acknowledge that the Father derives his nature and perfections from none; he acts in subjection to the will of none whatever; but all, the Son,

^u 1 Cor. viii. 6. Eph. iv. 6.

^v 1 Thess. i. 9.

^w John xvii. 3.

^x 2 Cor. i. 3. Eph. i. 3, 17.

and Spirit not excepted, act in subjection to his will. He hath all power, dominion, and sovereignty, original, underived, and independent on any, in and of himself. He is the fountain of deity. From these premises, acknowledged just by the orthodox, it is inferred by the Arians, that the Son and Spirit are *inferior* to the Father, and that he alone is the supreme, independent governor of the universe. Trinitarians apprehend, that this inferiority degrades the Son and Spirit into the rank of *creatures*. Some allow the consequences; others, reject that appellation, not only because the scripture never calls them by that name, but is entirely silent respecting their *essence* and *mode* of derivation, and therefore on a subject so mysterious, they think it best to determine nothing positively, lest they should incur the censure of *prying into things not seen, and attempting to be wise above what is written*. Their opponents consider all this as an evasion

of the difficulty, and maintain, that if the Son and Spirit be not each God *in the same, and in as high a sense as the father himself*, they are *creatures*. Here the matter ultimately seems to depend upon a question in which both parties are concerned, namely, whether an intelligent being can derive his nature, and all his attributes from the self-existent God, and not be a creature? If this be possible, the Arian may assert the inferiority of the Son and Spirit to the Father, without degrading them into the rank of creatures: if not possible, the Trinitarian, who asserts that the Father alone is unoriginate, and independent, and the fountain of deity, hath reason to consider, whether his own principles be not, in reason, chargeable with the same *degradation*.—Another objection against Arianism is, that it maintains two Gods, one supreme, and one subordinate. To relieve a little of the dullness of thus considering things pro and con, I shall quote the objection in
the

the words of the ingenious Mr. Robinson in his *Plea for the Divinity of Christ*, who proposes it in a manner peculiar to himself; and I will introduce an Arian copying the manner and reasonings of that gentleman, in answering it; taking care to mark the words borrowed from different parts of the *Plea* by inverted commas.

“ I am Jehovah, and there is *none else*.

“ There is no God besides me. A just

“ God and a Saviour, there is none

“ besides me. I am God, there is none

“ like me. Is there a God besides me?

“ yea there is no God, I know not

“ any. (Isaiah xlv. 5, 6, 21. Isaiah xlv.

“ 9. Isaiah xlv 8) This is the God of my

“ bible : but besides this God, there is in

“ my proposition another God, a dele-

“ gated God. Here are two Gods. Here

“ is a supreme God, and a subordinate

“ God; a natural God, and an artificial

“ God; a great God, and a little God. A

“ philosopher has one God; a Jew has

“ one God; a Christian it seems has two

Gods.

"Gods. What a world of difficulties
 "belong to this proposition, &c."

Nothing can be more plainly and expressly asserted in scripture, than that there is but *one God, one Lord, and one Saviour*, but the same scripture also asserts, there are *Gods many, and Lords many, and different Saviours*. Neh. ix. 27. Obad. xxi. How to reconcile this apparent inconsistency is the difficulty.—The scripture no where declares explicitly, that the one God is Father, Son, and Spirit; but it doth explicitly declare, that *there is none other God but one—and, to us there is but one God the Father^a*. The Father is *the only true God*, according to our Saviour's testimony^b; and according to St. Paul, *one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all*. If according to these express

^z Plea, p. 67.

^a 1 Cor. viii. 4, 5, 6.

^b John xvii. 1. comp. with v. 3.

^c Eph. iv. 6.

assertions, the Father alone be the one God, how can Christ be God is the question. "I am not a philosopher exercising the speculations of my uncertain reason to form a conjectural proposition," but following the light which scripture affords me. I read just now from Isaiah, *there is no God besides me*, and yet I find God characterized the *God of Gods*, and *Lord of Lords*^d, that he is *great above all Gods*, and that there is none to be compared to him in heaven or earth^e; and the most high God^f. If there were no God whatever, besides him who speaks in Isaiah, where would be the propriety of the scriptural phrases, *God of Gods*, and *God most high*?—*And the Lord said unto Moses, see I have made thee a God unto Pharaohs*. How is this? "Here is

^d Deut. x. 17. Dan. xi. 36.

^e Psalm xc. 3. 2 Chron. ii. 5. 2 Chron. vi. 14.

^f Kings viii. 23.

^g Gen. xiv. 18. 19, 20, 22. Psalm. lxxviii. 56. Psalm. lvii. 2, Acts vii. 48.

^h Exod. vii. 1.

"a great

“ a great God and a little God ; a natural
 “ God and an artificial God ; here are two
 “ Gods.” I will examine further.—God
 directs Moses to say to the children of
 Israel ; *thou shalt not revile the Gods, nor*
curse the ruler of thy people^b.—God judgeth
among the congregations of the Gods. I
have said ye are Gods, and all of you are
children of the most high, but ye shall die
like men.—*Worship him all ye Gods^k.*—
 Can the Psalmist be right? I read just
 now from Isaiah, *there is no God besides*
me ; and here I read of God judging
 among the Gods, and these Gods are
 called upon to worship him. Why, here
 are a supreme God and subordinate Gods ;
 a great God and little Gods ; and the
 little Gods are to worship the great one.—
 “ In a book of inspiration we may expect
 “ the utmost precision.” In that book I
 read, *I will praise thee with my whole*

^b Exod. xxii. 28.

ⁱ Psm. lxxxii. 1, 6.

^k Psm. xcvi. 7.

heart, before the Gods I will sing praises unto thee^l.—*Jesus answered, is it not written in your law, I said ye are Gods^m?*—*The word was God. The same was in the beginning* WITH Godⁿ.—*Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever—wherefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows*^o.—God being with God; and God, even the God of that God whose throne is for ever and ever; imply, according to the plain meaning of words, two Gods: if equal, there are two most high Gods: if unequal, there is, according to Mr. Robinson's proposition, a supreme and a subordinate God. If Moses be not God; if Angels and Magistrates be not Gods, according to the above quotations; surely, the writers of the Old and New Testament “discovered great injudiciousness in the

^l Psalm cxxxviii. 1.

^m John x. 34, 35.

ⁿ John i. 1, 2.

^o Heb. i. 8, 9.

“choice of their words, and adopted a very
 “incautious and dangerous stile,” though,
 I dare not go so far as to say, as Mr. R.
 doth, that on that account their inspira-
 tion may be questioned; and yet, such
 certainly was the language they used in
 their addresses to men prone to idolatry.
 The difficulty remains still as great as
 ever. Let us return once more to the
 passages in Isaiah. *I am Jehovah, and*
there is none else, there is no God besides
me. As a sound Trinitarian, Mr. R. must
 understand these words in one of these
 two senses. I am Jehovah, and there is
 no God besides *me Father, me Son, and*
me Holy Spirit, that is, besides *us three*:
 or I am the *essence* of Father, Son, and
 Spirit, and there is no *essence* besides *me*.
 But why the personal pronouns, *I*, and
me, should be applied respectively to
several persons, or to *no person*, but an
 abstract *essence*, contrary to their plain
 obvious meaning, it is difficult to say.
 Mr. R. observes, “there can be no

“ better canon of interpretation, than that
 “ which an amiable prelate has given us ;
 “ scripture is, to be taken in that sense in
 “ which the common people who heard it
 “ first took it^p. ” Now, let us suppose the
 common people in Isaiah’s time, attend-
 ing to the words under consideration ; do
 you think they conceived that God whom
 the prophet announced to them, to be
 three persons ; or no person ; but the
 essence of three ? — “ Assuredly, the com-
 “ mon people never thought of these
 “ senses. ” Bishop Beveridge observes, that
 “ the Jews, though they have had the law
 above three thousand, and the prophets
 above two thousand years among them,
 yet, to this day, they could never make
 this (the trinity) an article of faith, but
 they, as well as the Mahometans, still as-
 sert, that God is only one in person, as
 well as nature^q. ” — If it could be clearly
 ascertained which of the three persons,

^p P. 75.

^q Priv. Thoughts, pt. 2. p. 33.

or whether all together, were the one true God, whom the Patriarchs and Jews worshipped, we might then know, to whom to apply the scriptures cited from Isaiah, that there was *no God or Saviour besides him*, by which means, some part of the difficulty would be obviated. Let the attempt be made. *The God of Abraham*, saith St. Peter, *and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our Fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus*.—Had Jesus a Son? No. Had the Holy Spirit a Son? No. Had God the Father a Son? Yes. Then the Father was the God of the Patriarchs, and their descendants, and is the person pointed out in Isaiah. Perhaps, this may be a mistake, it was Jesus Christ that was there referred to. Suppose it, and then read the text.—Jesus Christ, the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, &c. glorified his Son Jesus. Jesus, according to this comment, would be the Father of himself. It will not do.—*We have*, said the Jews, *one*

Father, even God. Jesus said unto them, if God were your Father, ye would love me, for I proceeded forth and came from God.

—It is my Father honoureth me of whom ye say he is your God.—If we admit this testimony of our Saviour, his Father was the God of the Jews, and he is the person pointed out in Isaiah. This is *the one God and Father of all, who is above all, and greater than all, the only true God* whom our Saviour worshipped, and taught his disciples to worship, and called *his God and Father*^v; the most high, whose Son Jesus was^w; that God our Saviour, who saved us through Jesus Christ our Saviour^x; that God, who anointed the God whose throne is for ever and ever, with the oil of gladness above his fellows^y; that one

^s John viii. 41, 42, 54.

^t Eph. iv. 6.

^u John x. 29.

^v John xvii. 3. Matt. vi. 9. John iv. 23. John xx. 17.

^w Luke i. 32. Mark v. 7.

^x Tit. iii. 4, 6.

^y Heb. i. 8, 9.

Lord,

Lord, who made Jesus both Lord and Christ^z; and in short, *that God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners spake unto the fathers by the prophets, and hath in these last days spoken unto us by HIS SON^z.* This is the God of my bible. Mr. R. may possibly think, that if Jesus Christ be not included in this one God, he is no God at all; but if included, the difficulty will be solved. Let it be so. The Father and Son are the one God. How now stands his proposition? Why just as before. There is a supreme God and subordinate Gods; a natural God and artificial Gods; a great God and little Gods; for in that book where we may expect the greatest precision, angels and magistrates are stiled Gods; and men *Saviours*; notwithstanding that it asserts, there is but one God, and one Saviour.—At length, the solution of the difficulty seems to be this—“the one God, or the

^z Mark xii. 29. Acts ii. 36.

^a Heb. i. 1, 2.

only God, are expressions in scripture which signify the most high God. This appears plain from other instances: thus, when it is said that God only is holy, though angels are likewise stiled holy, the sense must be, that he alone is supereminently and unchangeably holy; as likewise it is declared, that there is none good but one, that is, God, though we read of good men and good spirits. In the same manner, though there are Gods many, as St. Paul tells us, to us Christians there is but one God the Father, one supreme God and Father of all, and all others derive their being, power, and authority, from him, the chief and independent God of the whole creation^b." Here ends the whole affair between Mr. Robinson and the supposed Arian. Whose solution of the difficulty is most agreeable to scripture, let the candid and impartial decide. I proceed to consider other difficulties at-

^b Appeal to Common Sense, p. 40.

tending the several systems which have been recited.

In reading the New Testament, the love of God in parting with his beloved Son, and delivering him unto death for our sakes, is spoken of in terms of the highest admiration; and the love of Christ is extolled as passing knowledge, for his willing abasement; that being *rich in the glory he had with the Father before the world was, he became poor for our sakes*, John xvii. 5, 2 Cor. viii. 9; that *having been in the form of God, he did (Greek) empty himself of it*, Phil. ii. 6, 7; *had a body prepared him*, Heb. x. 5; *came forth from the Father*, John xvi. 28; *came down from heaven, not to do his own will, but the will of him who sent him*, John vi. 38; *was made in the likeness of men: and found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself*, Phil. ii. 7, 8; *for a time was made lower than the angels*, Heb. ii. 9; *gave his life a ransom for many*, Mark x. 45; *was raised from the dead*, Rom. vi. 4; *left the*
L world,

world, and ascended where he was before; John xvi. 28, John vi. 62; was highly exalted, and had a name given him above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess him Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Phil. ii. 9, 10, 11.

When we attempt to reconcile the tenets of the real Trinitarians with this scriptural representation of our Saviour's abasement and sufferings, we are perplexed with many difficulties: for the second person in the Trinity, as being infinite and supreme, could not, for a moment, divest himself of his essential glory, and blessedness; could not, for one moment, be out of heaven, any more than the Father, because he filled all places with his presence; nor could he leave his Father's bosom, or undergo the least pain, sorrow, or trouble, much less die, because this would imply *mutability* and *imperfection*, which are inconsistent with Godhead. When in the garden Christ was in agony, and sweated as it were great drops of blood; and when on the cross, he cried, my God, my God, why hast thou

thou forsaken me ; as the second person in the Trinity, he possessed complete blessedness equally with the Father, and sustained no suffering whatever : so that the foregoing scriptural account must, on the scheme of the Realists and Tritheists, be understood in some figurative manner, and not real. Where then, it may be asked, is the extraordinary love of God in parting with his Son, and the love of Christ, in coming down from heaven, on their Tenets?—Let us next examine, whether the tenets of the Sabellians, the Nominals, and Socinians, will tally better with the foregoing scriptures : and, for this purpose, let it be asked, whether Christ, as man, quitted the glory he had with the Father ; came down from heaven, and was made flesh, &c. ? The answer is easy ; as man, Christ had no glory with the Father before the world was ; could not be said to empty himself of what he was never possessed ; could not be said to come down from heaven, as he had not been there, &c. If these scriptures can be applied to him, it must be as God : but as God, they cannot literally apply to him. For, as he and the Father are but one in-

finite Spirit, can it be possible, according to human ideas, that one Spirit can come forth from itself; leave the glory which it had with itself; and come down from heaven from itself; and be at once, the sender, and the sent? It should seem then, that the representations of scripture of the love of Christ in leaving the bosom of the Father, neither suit the human nor divine nature, and therefore are words of which we have no ideas^c. That these are no inconsiderable difficulties, appears from the embarrassment which Trinitarians, *real* and *nominal*, discover in speaking of the descent of Christ from heaven, and of his sufferings. “ Dr. South saith, it is *impossible* for the divine nature of Christ to come down from heaven.—Dr. Sherlock saith, that *properly* it cannot be.—Bishop Fowler, that he could not *properly* come down from heaven, any more than God the Father; from whom he is inseparable;—Bishop Bull, that his descent was *quasi* (as it were;)—Dr. Waterland,

^c See Dr. Watts's Imp. Quest. where this matter is treated in a more copious and forcible manner, and his scheme of the pre-existent Soul of Christ united with deity is set forth.

that it was only in *appearance*;—Cyril, Epiphanius, and the Councils, that it was only a soul and body that felt the pain of the cross: the substance of Christ which was with God, from the beginning, being impassible .” Thus, he that was in the beginning with God, and was God, according to the principles of the Realists, and Nominals, did not descend from heaven, because local motion is inconsistent with *Omnipresence*; was not literally humbled, because *immutable*; and neither *suffered*, nor *died*, because the nature of God is *incapable* of either pain or death.

If the scriptural account of Christ's descent from heaven be examined by the principles of the Socinians, it immediately occurs, that it must be explained away in some figurative manner; for, how could a mere man, who was never in heaven, be said to come down from thence; and having had his birth in mean and poor circumstances, should, from being rich, be said to be made poor, to have emptied himself of a glory, which he never had,

&c.? Socinus was so sensible of the difficulty attending this part of his scheme, that he arbitrarily supposed, that Christ was taken up into heaven a little before he entered on his office, in order to be instructed in the things which he was to announce to the world, as well as to account for the representations of scripture of his descent from thence.—The only remaining enquiry is, whether the tenets of the Arians, or those who hold the subordination of the Son to the Father, are encumbered with the like difficulties. If their own representation of the matter be believed, the love of God in parting with his beloved Son, and the love of Christ in leaving the bosom of the Father, coming down from heaven, humbling himself unto the death of the cross, and giving his life as a ransom for sin, are displayed in the most transcendent manner.—Here, saith one of them, “ Here was indeed a *love that passes knowledge* ; here was *grace* indeed, here was an example of *humility* and *condescension* that admits of no parallel ! not a *relative* humiliation, a *relative*

of *nominal* suffering of the Son of God, by his uniting himself (as they speak) to a man, i. e. in truth to another person, while he *himself* really suffered nothing, underwent no diminution, but was all the while possessed of the highest glory, of the same unchangeable blessedness. No; we believe that HE *who was in the beginning with God, and who was a God*, really came in *flesh*, and dwelt among us; that he actually laid aside the glory which he had with the Father before the world was; that he divested himself of the form of God, and really took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. We believe, according to the scriptures, that the same excellent being, who was the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of his person, by whom he made the worlds, was for a time made lower than the angels, and tasted death for every man; and believing this we own with St. Paul, a breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of Christ which passes knowledge^f.

The difficulties now laid before the reader are pointed out, not only to assist him in forming a judgment of the comparative excellence of the several systems which have passed in review when tried by scripture, but also, to inspire him with candour and moderation, towards those who differ from him. Those who are most ignorant of the difficulties of the present subject, are generally the most positive, that their particular notions of it are only true, and least candid in judging those whose notions are opposite. Having viewed it only through the cloudy medium of party prejudice, they know not how to make allowances for objections which they never regarded, or admit any force in arguments which they never attentively considered. Hence they are apt to lay the same stress on their own schemes, as on truths that are expressly asserted in scripture; and to consider every deviation from such schemes, as betraying an enmity to truth, or the effect of some sinister motive; not considering, that with equal reason and justice, others, who adopt a different scheme, may think the same

same of them. To check this illiberal spirit of bigotry, I apprehend a view of the foregoing difficulties might be useful. There is, however, one very considerable inconvenience that may arise from it to humble and serious Christians, namely, that in their approaches to God, their minds may be filled with doubts, whether the object they are going to address be *three* persons, or *one*; or *neither*, but *one individual essence* of three. To obviate this perplexity, I beg leave to lay before the reader, those considerations which give my own mind an undisturbed serenity in circumstances so interesting and awful.

Jesus Christ came to reveal the one true God, in a clearer manner, than he was before revealed. He himself worshipped this God, and taught his disciples to worship him. Could I worship God (thought I) under the same view, as my Lord and Saviour did; or, as he expressly taught his disciples; I should, so far, take the most effectual method to guard against error. Let me then ask, did he worship *himself*, jointly with his Father, and the Holy Spirit, as the Trinity, or the triune God? If he did, let me do the same.

If he did not, can I be wrong in following his example? Am I to be governed by the reasonings of men; and their schemes in this matter, or by the authority of the head of the church? I cannot for a moment hesitate.—I will examine then, to whom he addressed his prayers and thanksgivings.—*Jesus lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, FATHER—This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.—And now, O FATHER, glorify thou me—holy FATHER, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.—FATHER, I will that they also—O righteous FATHER, the world hath not known thee.—I thank thee, O FATHER, Lord of heaven and earth^b.—FATHER, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.—FATHER, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me^k.—FATHER, forgive them—FATHER, into thy hands, I commend my spirit^l.* Jesus from these instances appears to have addressed his prayers, and thank-

^g John xvii. 1, 3, 5, 11, 24, 25. ^b Matt. xi. 25, 26.

ⁱ John xi. 41. ^k Luke xxii. 42.

^l Luke xxiii. 34, 46. See also Matt. xxvi. 53. John xii. 27, 28. John xiv. 16.

givings, not to his *own nature*, or to *himself*, jointly with the Father, and Spirit, but to the Father only. If the Father be the Trinity, or the triune God, then, I also worship the Trinity.—I am, in the next place, to examine the directions he gave to his disciples, concerning that God whom they were to worship. If he directed them to worship Father, Son, and Spirit as the triune God, let me also do the same.—*But thou, when thou prayest—pray to thy Father.—Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him.—After this manner pray ye, Our Father which art in heaven^m. The hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.—the true worshippers shall worship the Father, for the Father seeketh such to worship himⁿ.—I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God^o.—Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you^p.—Through him (Christ) we both (Jews and Gentiles) have access by one Spirit to the Father^q.—And whatsoever ye do in*

^m Matt. vi. 6, 8, 9.

ⁿ John iv. 21, 22, 23, 24. See Matt. vii. 11.

^o John xx. 17. Rom. xv. 6. Eph. iii. 14.

^p John xvi. 23. See also John xv. 16. John xiv. 13.

^q Eph. ii. 18.

word, or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and (even) the Father by him. —According to these plain directions of Christ, and his Apostles, I am to come to one God the Father, through Christ, and by the Spirit. But is there in scripture one instance of prayer and praise addressed to God as Father, Son, and Spirit? Not one. Which then is it safest for me to trust to in a religious controversy; the plain directions, precepts, and examples of Christ, and his Apostles; or the reasonings and inferences of later ages, supported by neither scriptural precepts nor examples? Here I cannot hesitate a moment in determining.—I leave this point to every one's own private judgment. I only suggest the considerations which give my own mind satisfaction in regard to the acceptable method of worshipping God, in order to obviate the doubts, which might arise in the mind of a plain Christian, from the difficulties I have shewn to attend the several systems of the Trinity. Indeed this plan of gospel worship has been generally acknowledged just by all parties of Chris-

r Col. iii. 17. See Heb. vii. 25. Heb. xiii. 15. Eph.
v. 20.

tians.

tians. Dr. Berriman, a zealous advocate for the Trinity, in his *Historical Account* of it, saith, "As the Father was constantly acknowledged (in the Christian Church) *for the fountain of the deity*, and never represented as *acting in subordination* to the other persons; who, on the contrary, were always considered as *subordinate to him*, and sustaining their respective *offices* in the work of our redemption. From hence it is no wonder if the prayers of the church should generally be addressed *to* the person of the Father, *through* the merits of Christ.—We acknowledge the plain footsteps of his worship to appear through *all* antiquity, and the church has deservedly continued it to this day. Let our adversaries make the most of this concession'."—And much the adversaries make of it; for say they, if prayers and praises are to be addressed *to* the person of the Father, through the mediation of Christ; the object of worship is not the Trinity; and, in truth, the scripture affords not so much as one *example* of prayer and praise so addressed, nor any *precept* for that purpose. There is, however, a wor-

ship paid to Jesus Christ in the New Testament as *the lamb that was slain*—that redeemed us to God by his blood—and made us Kings and Priests unto God and (even) his Father^u.—whom God highly exalted, and to whom he gave a name above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess him Lord, to the glory of God the Father^v. This worship is evidently paid him as a mediator, because in the very nature of it, it is incompatible with the character of Godhead: for how strange would it be to pay a worship to the most high God, as being *slain*, and for making us priests unto God even his Father; as being *highly exalted*, and receiving a name above every name, and confessed Lord to the glory of another?—In my opinion, there is great weight in the following observation of the pious Mr. Bennet, author of the Christian Oratory. “If you will receive it, I think it a very useful truth, which had it been attended to, would have prevented many controversies that have disturbed the christian church, viz. that our chief concern with the Son of God is as mediator. We

¹ Rev. v. 12.^u Rev. v. 9.^v Rev. i. 6.^w Phil. ii. 10. 11.

are,

are neither concerned to know precisely what he was before he was incarnate, how employed in the world above, nor what he will be, and how employed, after his mediation is finished.—Our present business is with the mediator, whom God hath exalted, and to whom every knee must bow, and shall bow at last, till the end cometh; and he hath delivered up the kingdom to his Father*.”

Just as these sentiments may appear to some Christians, to others they appear no less erroneous. In their apprehensions, to worship Christ as Mediator, is robbing God of his peculiar glory, and violating the command, *thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*. It is possible, these apprehensions may arise from a confused idea of worship, which seems in general to consist in paying that respect and honour to an intelligent being which his real dignity and excellencies, and his known dominion and authority may justly claim. When this worship is paid in obedience to the command of God, it is so far from derogating from his glory, that it redounds to it; at least, in this light

the matter hath appeared to many learned Trinitarians. "The command of God," saith Dr. Owen, "is the ground and reason of all religious worship. The Angels are to worship the Lord Christ as Mediator, and the ground of their doing so is God's command. He saith, worship him all ye Angels." Bishop Sherlock observes, "if we honour Christ in consequence of the power and glory conferred on him by God, and in virtue of a command received from God, to honour the Son even as we honour the Father, then the honour we pay to Christ is part of the service we owe to God, and arises even out of that command, *thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*."

If this recital of the opinions of learned men will assist plain Christians in forming a just idea of the state of the controversy relating to the Trinity, to which the attention of the publick has been of late often called, and will induce them to exercise charity towards those who differ from them, the end of this pamphlet will be fully answered.

y Owen on Heb. vol. 1. p. 98. Since some of these sheets had gone into the press, Mr. Fawcett's Candid Reflections on the Doctrine of the Trinity came into my hands. It is an excellent pamphlet.

z Serim. vol. 4. p. 67.

F I N I S.

